

Pedestrian signals are installed to assist a person on foot to safely navigate across the street. At locations with lower traffic volumes, pedestrians can take their cues from the adjacent traffic and the vehicle signals. As intersections become more congested, separate signal indications are installed to aide pedestrians. Due to their operation being different than vehicle signals, pedestrian signals generate many questions.

Pedestrian signals are installed for two primary reasons: a high volume of foot traffic at an intersection, or, where the vehicle signals aren't readily visible to pedestrians. For example, some intersections are laid out in such a way that the vehicle signals can't be seen by pedestrians. In other cases, turning and merging traffic make intersections so complex that special provisions must be made for the safety of pedestrians.

Separate pedestrian signals aren't needed everywhere. Traffic signals without separate pedestrian signals are times in such a way to provide adequate time for a pedestrian to cross with the vehicles. In other instances, to do so would hinder the flow of traffic and not greatly enhance pedestrian safety. In these instances, separate pedestrian signals are provided. It is generally the policy of the City to install pedestrian signals at all signalized locations where such actions would increase pedestrian safety.

Traffic engineers worldwide are moving toward the use of symbol signs in place of words because they are easier for people to quickly comprehend, and can be recognized by people who can't read English. Pedestrian symbols are in a state of flux and therefore may be encountered with either word or symbol indications.

Pedestrian signals have the following meanings:

'WALK' or walking pedestrian symbol means you may begin crossing the street.

Flashing 'DON'T WALK' or flashing upraised hand symbol is a warning to people who have not yet entered the intersections that it's too late to cross the street before the traffic signal changes. Signals are timed to allow ample time for people who have already started walking across the street to safely reach the other side.

Steady 'DON'T WALK' or a steady upraised hand symbol means don't enter the street; but, quickly finish crossing if you have already started.

Buttons are installed to activate pedestrian signals where the vehicle traffic signal is timed for cars, not for people on foot. If you don't activate the pedestrian signal by pushing the button, the traffic light may not give you enough time to safely cross the street. You should push the button once, and wait for the 'WALK', or walking pedestrian symbol signal.

Location. New federal standards require that all pedestrian crossings now be located away from intersections. Existing pedestrian signals at intersections which only stop traffic along the main corridor are being phased out and replaced with midblock crossings located a minimum of 80 feet from the intersection.